Athena SWAN quick actions checklist

It is essential that your Athena SWAN submission is based on quantitative and qualitative evidence. There are various ways to gather evidence:

- Analyse departmental staff and student data (essential)
- Run a staff survey (strongly advised) – EDI advisor Cherry Canovan can help with this
- Hold focus groups

From the data you should then decide what your key gender equality priorities are. Below are some first steps to tackle two common issues.

Low proportion of female undergraduates compared to the sector average

Recruitment

- Review your marketing literature and web presence for gender balance – are women represented? Are you using gender-neutral text?
- Before open days, check if the images in your department represent both men and women.
- Involve female staff and students in open days and outreach (but avoid overburdening).
- Find out why female applicants are rejecting offers – admissions can break down the acceptors and decliners survey by gender on request. Contact Cherry to find out more.

Improving conditions for female students

- Offer female students the opportunity to have a female personal tutor.
- Introduce peer mentoring schemes.
- Advertise the above in order to attract more female applicants
- Run focus groups for undergraduates and address concerns raised.
- Improve visibility of female academic role models.

Low proportion of female staff compared to the sector average

Recruitment

- Review job descriptions and adverts for words or phrases that may be offputting to women.
- Make more skills ‘desirable’ rather than ‘essential’ and try to make role descriptions less tightly defined to increase the pool of qualified people.
- Include a strong diversity statement on all job adverts. Cherry can provide sample wording.
- Institute search committees to proactively seek out excellent female applicants.
• Re-advertise posts that do not attract some minimum number of female candidates.
• Ensure all individuals involved in staff recruitment complete Recruiting the Best training.
• Advertise inclusive practices on your website in order to attract greater diversity.

Improving conditions for female staff and those with caring responsibilities
• Hold all meetings within ‘core hours’, eg 10am-4pm, so that those with caring responsibilities can attend. Hold lunches with visiting speakers instead of dinners.
• Ensure females are represented on key committees.
• Use your workload model, which should include outreach, to promote equality. Ensure there is a fair gender balance and/or rotation of roles that present development opportunities, and those that may have an overburdening impact.
• Encourage take-up of mentoring opportunities.
• Ensure all staff undertake online diversity training.
• Institute systems so that all staff are automatically considered for promotion every year.
• Share examples of successful promotion cases.
• Consider instituting a women’s group or forum in the department.

The aim of the Athena SWAN charter is to IMPROVE gender balance, so even if your figures match the sector average, you should still be thinking about ways in which you can make things better for everybody. Bear in mind also that your department may face a completely different set of challenges to those addressed above. This is a basic rather than an exhaustive list of actions.

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